

HOME FOR EVERY AMERICAN

MAYOR AWARD: Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz

Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz declared homelessness "an issue of critical importance to our city" during his 2004 State of the City Address and followed shortly with the unveiling of a 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, *Helping Hands, Mending Lives*. With the new plan, which called for a public/private partnership and cross agency collaborations, Mayor Diaz set the city on a trajectory that led to the announcement last year of a 50% reduction in the number of homeless people between July 2006 and January 2007. Included in that reduction was a 27% decrease in the number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness.

Mayor Diaz's personal and professional commitment on the issue of homelessness has led him to be a leader among mayors as well, ensuring focus and partnership on the issue at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and becoming a signatory to the new *America's Road Home Statement of Principles and Actions*. Mayor Diaz will become President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors this spring.

Mayor Diaz has also adopted the innovation of Project Homeless Connect in "Miami Cares" events, at which he personally welcomes homeless neighbors and rallies partners from the public and private sector for results. Miami Cares Day is organized by the City of Miami's Homeless Assistance Program, which aims to identify and engage homeless individuals, and to place them into appropriate housing, facilitate employability skills, create a work history, and instill life management responsibilities, thereby strengthening their ties to the community. The Miami Homeless Assistance Program operates a nationally recognized outreach effort that includes the hiring of formerly homeless men and women who are trained as community outreach specialists. Currently, 30 formerly homeless men and women are employed by MHAP, which also provides assessment, placement, referral, and transportation services.